

LITERARY STYLE.—II.*

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IF a man is a sham and a hypocrite, his manner will be sure to blab against him. It is a Frenchman, not a Puritan, who teaches that even the painter's work is deteriorated by his life. "What must the artist have on his canvas? That which he has in his imagination. What can he have in his imagination? That which he has in his life." So with literature; it is even more tell-tale than any other art. How easily do we distinguish between the passages which came from the author's heart and those in which his inspiration failed! What thoughtful reader does not know that any doubt or dogmatism, any langour in feeling or shallowness of insight, any distraction or loss of interest in the theme, any weariness of work or insatiable passion for it, all the shadows of his soul and all the intermissions of his sensibility, stamp themselves on the printed page as distinctly as if the writer had purposely told the world his secrets? Even when a writer tries to make a mask of his style, he almost inevitably betrays himself by a pet phrase or mannerism, like Macaulay's antitheses or Cicero's *esse videatur*. How admirably, with one stroke of the pen, did Sydney Smith characterize Jeffrey, when he wrote to a friend: "Jeffrey has been here with his *adjectives*, which always travel with him!" How vainly does Gibbon, that great master of the art of sneering, try to mask his hostility to Christianity by

suggestion and equivocation! Instead of asserting, he insinuates; and stabs Christianity, not directly, but by side-thrusts of parenthesis, inuendo and implication.

Again, there are writers, and those, too, of high ability, who betray themselves by certain tricks and devices of style which are purely mechanical, and which, by careful study, we can learn and imitate. Whatever the witchery of their manner, however wondrous their triumphs over the difficulties of expression, we can mark the process by which they achieve their results almost as easily as we can note the manner in which an artisan puts together the pieces of a watch. Macaulay, for example, by his *Essays* and his *History*, has won a popularity almost without parallel, because he expresses in vivid language thoughts easy to grasp, and because his power of lucid, swift, brilliant statement has never been surpassed. He is, too, a remarkably correct writer, uniting splendour and precision as few have done before. On the other hand, he is possessed with the very demon of mannerism, and his tricks of style are so transparent that the veriest novice may detect them. The peculiar swing and swell of his sentences, the epigrammatic antithesis and balanced clauses, the short sentences between the long, "that, like the fire of sharpshooters through cannon, break the volume of sound," are not the product of the highest art. Though pleasing at first, they tire at last by their unshaded brilliancy and unvarying mo-

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